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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by Elizabeth Seton Federation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

1. Relevant to the theme of "Promotion of Full Employment and Decent Work for all", the theme this 46th session of the Commission for Social Development, we find that the fact of the nearly 200 million persons endeavouring to encounter work by the act of migration is a core issue for consideration. The human dignity that results from an ability to provide life's necessities for one's family is a motivating factor for many peoples of the world to leave their homes, and even their countries, to earn enough money to feed, house, educate, and provide medical care for those for wh they are responsible. This is often referred to as the migration push factor. The increasing availabilit of work, especially service work, particularly in developed countries which are experiencing an ageing population, as well as a population focused on technical, banking and finance, and industrial work is often referred as the pull factor. There will always be jobs in need of workers in certain area the world, as well as workers without jobs in others. Migration as an issue will always be with us.

Incentives for migration

2. Many migrants move from rural areas in their own countries to the cities, or migrate to countri outside of their own in search of work to provide bare sustenance for their extended families. Other noting the disparities between their non-existent jobs or low wages and the prospects of higher wag in other areas, migrate in order to improve their lifestyle. Still others, in countries without pensions adequate provision in times of disaster, seek to provide this buffer.

Migrant recruitment

3. Traditionally, migrants would risk travelling to a country where they only hoped that opportunities might provide them with the wages that they needed. Increasingly, through more formalized and globalized recruitment, employers use increasingly developed enterprises to recruit workers. There is a bifurcation of the stream of foreign workers: a skilled work force with good compensation and benefits, and an unskilled workforce that is paid low wages and experiences unsatisfactory conditions with few or no benefits. Moreover, in the case of undocumented workers, they are vulnerable to much exploitation, since they can be threatened with exposure and deportatio Compounding the vulnerability for migrants is the loss of earned benefits. Where foreign workers d not have the possibility of gaining status for employment, the wage scale, local employment opportunities, and observance of labour laws are compromised. With respect to skilled foreign worker there exists the phenomenon of "brain drain" that depletes the country of origin of its trained workers, and complements the lack of skilled workers in the receiving country at low cost to them.

Feminization of migration

4. More than half of migrants are now women. Many more migrants are children. Since these groups usually begin with fewer rights, they are even more vulnerable to exploitation. There is also tremendous impact on families when mothers leave dependents behind. One of the exponentially increasing abuses related to migration is that of trafficking. When a migrant is controlled by the recruiter, there is a very short step to indentured servitude and slavery. Increasingly this involves me as well.

Human rights issues

5. Many nations have labour regulations protecting temporary migrant workers. Temporary migrant workers under valid contracts, however, are frequently subject to discrimination, deplorable working and living conditions, and low wages. If they complain, they are likely to endanger their re-employment for following seasons. These workers often suffer lack of access to redress of grievances.

6. Labour laws are especially ineffective in the case of undocumented temporary migrant workers. These workers are vulnerable to deportation if they are reported by retaliating employers. There are insufficient protections against fragmentation of families of migrant workers, especially because of the nature of temporary labour contracts and also in the event that a family member is subject to deportation.

7. Among the consequences of deportation are: break-up of families who have finally been able to reunite, and failure to recognize the benefits accrued to the receiving country by a statistically more law abiding group who contribute to the tax base and are willing to do more labour-intensive work. This happens because when people who are recruited to work in a country where visas are not available and they enter without documents, they are often deemed criminals for that reason alone.

Remittances

8. There is a global consensus that remittances are the most effective form of development for the majority of countries that are known as the sending countries. Although there is much discussion of a more organized use of remittances by countries, the fact remains that these are private funds. Governments have an opportunity to facilitate the transfer of these funds and their productive investment by families.

9. Recommendations

(a) Include migrants themselves when discussing the "Promotion of full employment and decent work for all".

(b) Focus on the creation of decent work in the "sending countries" so that migration is a choice and not a necessity.

(c) Compensate women for work in the care sector so that they do not have to migrate.

(d) Work toward a fair globalization to create a context where developing countries have equal opportunity to complete in the global market.

(e) Explore, in multilateral agreements, the right for people to move across borders, as in the case with of capital and commodities.

(f) Work internationally on a safe and supervised management of migration so that as long as it remains a strategy for economic survival, human beings are not exploited as commodities.

(g) Agree upon a need for a rights-based approach to human migration

(h) Increase the number of member states who sign on to existing international protective measures especially the UN Convention on the Protection of all Migrant Workers and their Families.

(i) Continue to address the need to mitigate global warming which already displaces many people in developing countries.

(j) Address the demand side of sex exploitation to eliminate trafficking.

Note: Statement endorsed and supported by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Congregation of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas (also known as Sisters of Mercy), National Council of Women of the United States, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, VIVAT International, Soroptimist International, Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, International Association of Schools of Social Work, Salesian Missions, Dominican Leadership Conference, Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants, Pax Romana, Loretto Community, UNANIMA International, School Sisters of Notre Dame and Sisters of Loretto.